GD GOENKA SCHOOL | Srinagar Jammu & Kashmir
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Rationalizing the Academic Calendar in Alignment with Regional Needs

The functioning of schools is closely shaped by the environments in which they exist. Regional condition, particularly climate and geography, have a direct bearing on academic calendars, teaching schedules and the completion of prescribed syllabi. It is within this broader context that variations in school calendars across India can be understood.

India's school calendar is far from uniform. Across the country, academic sessions begin and end at different times, reflecting the diversity of climate, geography and local administrative needs. These variations are not arbitrary; rather, they represent practical responses to regional challenges that shape the rhythm of school life.

In **Delhi and much of North India**, the academic session generally concludes in March and a new session begins in April. Schools function until mid-May, after which they close for the summer vacation. Classes resume in July, allowing students to avoid the intense summer heat typical of the northern plains. Under this arrangement, schools are usually able to ensure between **200 and 220 working days** in an academic year.

In the **southern states**, the pattern differs slightly. Annual examinations are usually completed by the end of March. Schools then close for the peak summer months of April and May and reopen in June. Despite the shift in timing, the academic calendar still manages to provide the minimum **200 working days** required for effective schooling.

However, the situation in **Kashmir** presents a distinct challenge. The region's severe winters significantly influence the structure of the academic year. In many state-syllabus schools, the academic session concludes in October, and a new session begins in November. Winter vacation generally begins in the first week of December, with schools reopening in early March once conditions improve.

Several **CBSE-affiliated private schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas and Army schools** in the region follow slightly different academic practices. Some institutions conduct their annual examinations by the end of November, declare results shortly thereafter, and close for winter vacation in the first half of December. Classes resume in the first week of March.

There was, at one point, an attempt to align the state's academic schedule more closely with the national pattern. The government experimented with conducting annual examinations

immediately after the winter break, followed by the commencement of a new session in April. The experiment, however, lasted only a year before the system reverted to the **November–October academic cycle**.

While the **March-to-March session** aligns neatly with the CBSE calendar followed across much of the country, its practical implementation in Kashmir remains difficult for several reasons.

One challenge lies in the uncertainty surrounding winter vacations. From the last week of November onwards, the government may declare the closure of schools depending on weather conditions. Since the exact date cannot always be predicted, schools must ensure that annual examinations are completed by the end of November. Once examinations conclude, attendance tends to decline as many families travel during the winter months. The early weeks of December are therefore largely devoted to announcing results and distributing textbooks for the next academic year.

The long winter break also creates another academic complication. Many parents encourage their children to begin studying the next year's syllabus during this period. When schools reopen in March, some students return with the feeling that they have already covered parts of the lessons, which can sometimes affect attentiveness and classroom discipline.

Reopening schedules themselves can be uncertain. Unforeseen circumstances—ranging from weather disruptions to broader external developments—may delay the start of the academic term.

Another practical issue arises from the **CBSE board examinations**, which are typically held during March. Many CBSE-affiliated schools are simultaneously involved in conducting or evaluating these examinations. This makes it difficult to organise a smooth and fully functional reopening of the new academic session.

Consequently, by the time CBSE schools reopen in March, many state-syllabus schools may have already completed a significant portion of the mid-semester syllabus. Schools following the March-to-March calendar may therefore end up with only **140 to 165 effective working days**, far below the ideal academic requirement.

Differences in academic calendars also complicate student mobility. Families often move their children between state-syllabus and CBSE schools. When academic sessions do not align, students may face either a loss of instructional time or unnecessary repetition of lessons.

Admissions create yet another layer of complexity. State-syllabus schools usually complete their admission process by October. If CBSE schools begin admissions in October but start classes only in March, parents may find the waiting period uncertain and inconvenient. In some families, one child may begin attending school in November while another must wait until March, creating avoidable logistical difficulties.

Yet the **November–October academic cycle** does offer certain advantages. For students in Grades VIII and IX, the winter months can be used for structured academic engagement through reading assignments, project work or hybrid learning initiatives. With thoughtful planning, schools can transform the long winter break into a period of meaningful academic consolidation.

By changing the academic calendar to the winter zone timing the following changes will happen:

1) Total number of working days in the academic year 2026 will be 158

2) In the academic session 2026-27 the total working days will be approximately 200 to 210.

3) In the previous years we were getting on an average 150 working days only.

4) The winter vacations can be effectively utilized with some academic support.

5) For students in **Grades X, XI and XII**, this calendar may in fact be beneficial. Completing the syllabus by October provides them with additional time for revision and focused preparation ahead of their board examinations.

6) CBSE conducts the practicals and internal assessments for the Winter Zone in the month of November.

Ultimately, the question of the academic calendar is not merely administrative; it goes to the heart of effective schooling. In a region like ours, where climatic conditions directly influence learning continuity, aligning the academic session with local realities becomes essential rather than optional.

With greater clarity in closing and reopening schedules, schools can minimise uncertainty, ensure better planning, and make more meaningful use of instructional time. A well-aligned academic calendar will not only strengthen academic delivery but also bring much-needed consistency for students and parents alike.

In light of these considerations, the school has decided to transition to an October-based academic session beginning this academic year. This shift is aimed at creating a more balanced, predictable, and academically effective schedule for our students.

A detailed planner outlining examinations and key activities has been shared alongside for your reference. We look forward to the continued support and cooperation of all stakeholders in making this transition smooth and successful.

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